

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 AMMAN 01548 01 OF 02 171417Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----171421Z 081243 /40  
O 171327Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
TO SECSTATE IMMEDIATE 971

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 1548

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, JO, US, XF  
SUBJECT: TALK WITH EX-PRIME MINISTER - AREA SITUATION

SUMMARY: IN LONG TALK WITH RIFAI, HE TOLD ME THAT HE BELIEVES (AS HAS BEEN REPORTED IN PAST) THAT JORDAN MUST TAKE LEAS IN MOVING TO NEGOTIATIONS, IN EFFECT PRE-EMPTING ANY ACTION TO BRING IN PLO. WE EXPLORED NUMBER OF DETAILS HIS THINKING. HE HAD JUST FINISHED TALKING WITH SYRIAN FONMIN KHADDAM. RIFAI SAID KHADDAM INDICATED HE BELIEVES SYRIA WOULD SUPPORT RIFAI'S APPROACH. RIFAI SAID ALSO THAT HE HAD HAD LONG TALK WITH KING EARLIER THIS WEEK, AND KING VISITED RIFAI AGAIN WHILE I WAS AT HIS HOME. RIFAI BELIEVES THAT GOJ GOVERNMENT CHANGE REQUIRED TOPUT HIS IDEA INTO EFFECT. KING HAS NOT STRATEGY NOW. ALL HIS PRESENT ADVISORS ARE NEGATIVE ON A NEGOTIATING ROLE FOR JORDAN. RIFAI SEES REAL OPPORTUNITY NOW TO WIN ARAB (SYRIAN AND EGYPTIAN) SUPPORT FOR JORDAN'S FULL RETURN TO A NEGOTIATING ROLE LEAVING PLO BEHIND. RIFAI ALSO BELIEVES THAT NO GOJ GOVERNMENT CHANGE WILL TAKE PLACE UNTIL KING VISITS WASHINGTON. AFTER THAT HE BELIEVES THER WILL STILL BE TIME FOR HIS STRATEGY TO UNFOLD. HE IS ECSTATIC ABOUT PRESIDENT'S MARCH 9 PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS AND IS TELLING HIS FRIENDS SO, MANY OF WHOM, INCLUDING KING, HE SAYS HAVE NOT FULLY UNDERSTOOD IMPORTANCE OF STATEMENT. END SUMMARY.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 AMMAN 01548 01 OF 02 171417Z

1. SAW RIFAI MARCH 16 AFTER HIS RETURN FROM EUROPEAN VACATION CUT SHORT BY FAMILY ILLNESS OF HIS UNCLE EX-PRIME MINISTER ABDUL MUSIM RIFAI.

2. RIFAI BEGAN BY SAYING THAT HE CONSIDERED PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT MARCH 9 MOST IMPORTANT EVENT IN MIDDLE EAST IN RECENT

YEARS. ARABS WHO KNEW US KNEW THAT KISSINGER AND NIXON WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN SO CLEAR ON TERRITORIAL WITHDRAWAL ISSUE. IT IS BETTER THAN THE ROGER'S PLAN. IT LEAVES PLENTY OF ROOM OPEN FOR NEGOTIATION ON SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS, BUT BASICALLY SPEAKING, IT CALLS FOR THE KIND OF TERRITORIAL SETTLEMENT ARABS HAVE BEEN COUNTING ON. ARABS SHOULD NOT BE AFRAID OF NORMALIZATION MEASURES IN CONTEXT SUCH A SETTLEMENT. FURTHER THEY SHOULD NOT BE UNHAPPY ABOUT PRESENCE ISRAELI FORCES ON ARAB TERRITORY FOR SOME PERIOD IF NECESSARY. UP TO EIGHT YEAR PHASED WITHDRAWALS ARE IN CONTEXT OF TOTAL SETTLEMENT AS HE READS STATEMENT, NOT PERIOD REQUIRED TO NEGOTIATE AGREEMENT AS SOME ARABS HAVE INTERPRETED STATEMENT. RIFAI SAID KING WAS NOT COMPLETELY CLEAR ON QUESTION UNTIL HE SPOKE WITH HIM, BLAMING KING'S LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ON CERTAIN ADVISORS WITH WHOM RIFAI HAS BEEN FEUDING. RIFAI SAID HE ALSO TALKED TO KHADDAM ALONG ABOVE LINES (SEPTTEL) AND THAT KHADDAM HAD BEEN SOUR ON QUESTION, BUT WEETENED UP ONCE HE HAD HEARD RIFAI EXPLAIN IT.

3. WE THEN REVIEWED SOME OF RIFAI'S THINKING ON NEXT STEPS. RIFAI SAID HE HAD NOT CHANGED HIS ATTITUDE FROM THAT RECORDED OUR PAST REPORTING ON SUBJECT. IN ESSENCE HE BELIEVES THAT HORDAN, NOT PLO, MUST NEGOTIATE FOR RETURN OF WEST BANK. AREA COULD BE UN TRUST TO JORDAN. REFERENDUM OR PLEBISCITE SHOULD BE HELD TO DETERMINE FUTURE AND JORDAN AND PLO SHOULD WORK OUT THEIR LINKS NOW FOR CONFEDERATION WHICH WOULD BE APPROVED BY THAT VOTE.

4. TO CLARIFY MY IMPRESSION OF HIS IDEAS I PURSUED SEVERAL  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 AMMAN 01548 01 OF 02 171417Z

QUESTIONS WITH HIM. THE FOLLOWING EMERGED. JORDAN HAD A ROLE TO PLAY IN NEGOTIATIONS. IT SHOULD GO SOON TO THE OTHER ARABS WITH ITS ASSESSMENT. THE ASSESSMENT WAS THAT JORDAN WOULD BE READY TO LET PLO

GO TO NEGOTIATE, BUT THAT ISRAEL, THE US AND THE PLO COULD NOT ACCEPT THAT ON A MUTUALLY AGREEABLE BASIS. ON THE OTHER HAND JORDAN COULD GO ALONE IF EGYPT AND SYRIA WOULD SUPPORT IT ALONG WITH THE US. THERE COULD BE SOME COSMETIC INCORPORATION OF PLO, IF IT WOULD AGREE, IN GOJ DELEGATION. WAY COULD EVEN BE HELD OPEN FOR PLO, OR SOME OTHER PALESTINIANS, IN THE FUTURE. HERE RIFAI MENTIONED THAT KING IN JORDANIAN TEACHERS' DAY SPEECH TODAY TALKED NOT ABOUT THE PLO, BUT THE "PALESTINIAN PEOPLE" IN CONNECTION WITH THE PEACE SETTLEMENT AND SAID THIS WAS AN IMPORTANT CHANGE FOR KING.

5. IN EFFECT, RIFAI SAID THAT SYRIA AND EGYPT WANTED NEGOTIATIONS - EGYPT ESPECIALLY SO. THE GOJ COULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS INTEREST AND THE PLO'S PRESENT AND EXPECTED CONTINUING INTRANSIGENCE TO SUPPLY THE CRITICAL OR KEY MASS REQUIRED

TO GET GENEVA GOING. IN TERMS OF TACTICS, RIFAI SAID IT WOULD BE CURCIAL FOR JORDAN TO COORDINATE THIS APPROACH FIRST WITH THE US - THEN HE REVERSED HIMSELF AND SAID "NO, FIRST WITH SYRIA -- THEY WILL BE TOUGHER TO GET ON BOARD" AND IT WOULD BE EASIER TO DEAL WITH THE US LATER. AFTER THAT JORDAN SHOULD APPROACH EGYPT ALONG WITH SYRIA TO GET SUPPORT. JORDAN FOR THE INTERIM WOULD NOT CHANGE IT SPUBLIC POSITION AND SOULD CONTINUE ITS DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO.

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 01548 02 OF 02 171443Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 AMMAN 1548

EXDIS

THE PLO WILL TAKE CARE OF SEEING THAT THE DIALOGUE GOES NOWHERE AS INDEED THEY ARE TAKING CARE OF THE PRESENT PNC MEETING IN CAIRO. ALL OF THIS RIFAI SEES AS PLAYING INTO JORDAN'S HANDS. HE ADDS THAT IN TACTICAL TERMS THE TIME FOR JORDAN TO MOVE IS BEFORE GOING TO WASHINGTON. THIS CANNOT BE DONE WITH KING'S PRESENT ADVISORS. THEY ARE TOO RIGID AND NEGATIVE AND FEARFUL. THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE CHANGED. RIFAI SAYS THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY WILL BE BEFORE THE KING GOES TO WASHINGTON. HE DID NOT SAY HE WOULD FORM OR WISH TO FORM THE NEW GOVERNMENT, BUT IT IS CLEAR FROM HIS STATEMENTS THAT HE BELIEVES ONLY ZAID RIFAI CAN CARRY ON THIS SCENARIO. RIFAI BELIEVES KING IS NOT READY TO BRING HIM BACK NOW- NOT FOR THREE OR FOUR MONTHS - AND THAT KING DOES NOT WANT ANOTHER INTERIM GOVERNMENT. RIFAI'S PRINCIPAL CONDITION FOR FORMING A GOVERNMENT IS A GUARANTEE FROM THE KING THAT ROYAL FAMILY WILL NOT INTERFERE IN DAY-TO- DAY LIFE OF THE KINGDOM AND ITS RULE. RIFAI IMPLIED KING NOT READY YET TO GRANT THIS CONDITION.

6. BASIC TO RIFAI'S VIEW IS THAT PRESENT LOG JAM ON THE PALESTINIANS CAN BE BROKEN BY JORDAN. JORDAN MUST SOONER OR LATER DO IT. HE PREFERS SOONER, BUT RECOGNIZES THAT LATER (AFTER KING'S TRIP TO THE US) IS PROBABLY THE APPROPRIATE TIME.

ALSO BASIC TO RIFAI'S JUDGEMENT IS THAT NEITHER THE US, THE ISRAELIS NOR THE PLO WILL CHANGE THEIR VIEWS ON THIS ISSUE SUFFICIENTLY TO WORK OUT A COMPROMISE WHICH WILL NOT  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 AMMAN 01548 02 OF 02 171443Z

INCLUDE JORDAN. ON THE OTHER HAND EGYPT AND SYRIA ARE INTERESTED ENOUGH IN NEGOTIATIONS AND NOT CONCERNED ENOUGH ABOUT THE PLO TO STOP JORDAN AND INDEED MIGHT SUPPORT JORDAN. SAUDIS ARE ENIGMATIC ON THE PROBLEM, BUT WILL PROBABLY GO ALONG WITH WHATEVER SYRIA AND EGYPT WILL SETTLE FOR. CERTAINLY, RIFAI SAID, THEY DO NOT SEEM TO BE INTERESTED IN ENHANCING THE PLO AT JORDAN' EXPENSE, BUT THE REVERSE (JORDAN AT PLO'S EXPENSE) DID NOT SEEM TO HIM TO BE A PROBLEM FOR THE SAUDIS.

7. RIFAI SAID THAT THE US CAN HELP JORDAN THE MOST BY DOING TWO THINGS: (A) IT CAN CONTINUE TO WORK HARD FOR AND DO WHATEVER IT CAN TO ENSURE THAT A GENEVA CONFERENCE IS HELD BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR AND (B) THAT IT CAN CONTINUE TO INSIST ON INVITING THE REGULAR MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE TO ATTEND ITS RESUMED SESSION ON THE BASIS PREVIOUSLY AGREED UPON (IE IN DECEMBER 1973).

8. AT THIS POINT OUR CONVERSATION WAS INTERRUPTED BY THE ARRIVAL OF SEVERAL JORDANIAN EX-MINISTERS AND THEN BY THE ARRIVAL OF THE KING WITH WHOM WE DISCUSSED BRIEFLY THE NEWS OF THE ASSASSINATION OF KAMAL JUNBLATT AND THEN DEPARTED.

8.COMMENT: IN MY DISCUSSION WITH RIFAI, I POINTED OUT THAT A WEAK PART OF HIS SCENARIO CONCERNED SYRIAN AND EGYPTIAN SUPPORT. HE SAID THAT HE HAD JUST FINISHED OUTLINING THE EFFORT TO KHADDAM WHO HAD LEFT SHORTLY BEFORE I ARRIVED. KHADDAM SAID HE BELIEVED SYRIA WOULD SUPPORT SUCH AN APPROACH BY JORDAN. EGYPT WAS A DIFFERENT STORY. RIFAI BELIEVES THAT SADAT WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE HIMSELF AS FREE AS POSSIBLE TO BREAK AWAY FOR SEPARATE NEGOTIATIONS AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE IF THE JOINT PROCESS GETS BOGGED DOWN. HOWEVER, SADAT HAS TO GET THE PROCESS STARTED AND HE CANNOT DO THAT ALONE. ALSO RIFAI BELIEVES THAT SADAT WILL SUFFER HEAVILY AGAIN IN THE FUTURE AS HE DID OVER SINAI II IF HE BREAKS AWAY BY HIMSELF. FURTHER RIFAI'S JUDGEMENTS ABOUT NOT MUCH HAPPENING ON THIS SORT OF AN INITIATIVE UNTIL AFTER THE KING'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON ARE PROBABLY CORRECT. HE KNOWS  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 AMMAN 01548 02 OF 02 171443Z

THE LOCAL SITUATION WELL ENOUGH TO HAVE A GOOD FEEL FOR THE KING'S MIND. THE EFFORT HAS THE BASIC DISADVANTAGE OF NOT HAVING VERY MUCH IN IT FOR THE PALESTINIANS, ALTHOUGH RIFAI IS PREPARED

IF IT IS NECESSARY FOR EARLY LINKS WITH THE PLO AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR A CONFEDERATION AS WELL AS SOME COSMETIC PRESENCE OF THE PLO IN A JORDANIAN DELEGATION. THE PROPOSAL ALSO HAS THE DISADVANTAGE IN THE AREA AND LOCALLY OF BEING A RIFAI CREATION. HOWEVER, IT IS THE ONLY PROPOSAL THAT HAS COME ALONG THUS FAR THAT HAS TAKEN FULL ACCOUNT OF THE STATEMENTS WHICH THE SECRETARY MADE WHEN HE WAS HERE ABOUT THE EXTREME DIFFICULTIES IN OUR SUPPORTING PLO (WITHOUT CHANGES IN TIS ATTITUDES) PARTICIPATION IN THE NEGOTIATION. AN INTERESTING FEATURE OF THE PROPOSAL, IF SUCH IS SOUNDLY BASED, IS THAT IT ALSO TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE PLO'S PRESENT UNWILLINGNESS OR INABILITY TO MOVE, AND IS SOMEWHAT LESS DANGEROUS THAN WHAT THE EGYPTIANS SUGGESTED TO WALDHEIM ABOUT INVITING THE PLO TO GENEVA ON THE EXPECTATION THAT THEY WOULD NOT OR COULD NOT ACCEPT ALSOON THE POSITIVE SIDE, THE PROPOSAL IS A WAY TO GET GENEVA STARTED BY LETTING THE ARABS DO THE RUNNING. RIFAI'S APPROACH HERE IS TO LAY OUT THE ALTERNATIVES FOR SADAT AND ASAD AND LET THEM DECIDE. IF HIS EFFORTS SHOULD FAIL, HE BELIEVES THERE IS NOTHING LOST. HE SAYS HE REMAINS SKEPTICAL THE ISRAELIS WILL EVER AGREE TO ANYTHING IN THE MIDDLE EAST, BUT SAYS HE KNOWS THE RUNNING HAS TO BE MADE AND IS LOATH TO SEE JORDAN EXCLUDE ITSELF. INTHE LONG RUN RIFAI BELIEVES THE KING'S EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS TO THE WEST BANK REMAIN STRONG AND ON THAT BASIS HE CAN SELL HIS IDEAS TO THE KING. END COMMENT.

9. DEPARTMENT REPEAT AS DESIRED.  
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